



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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This Comprehensive Master Plan document (hereinafter referred to as the "Plan") sets forth the City of Franklin's vision for its future development. This Plan is intended to serve the City to both the year 2010 (defined as Phase I of this Plan) and somewhat beyond that time framework (defined as Phase II of this Plan).

Sound planning is important to City of Franklin officials, landowners, and residents. The City of Franklin stands at a crucial point in time in terms of making decisions about its future growth and development. It has experienced somewhat rapid and continual urban and suburban growth over the last 25 years. This is quite evident from the conversion of former agricultural land to both urban and suburban uses. This growth, however, has significantly increased during the early 1990s and is expected to continue to do so over the next two decades (see Chapters 2 and 8). The City has become, in recent years, one of the most rapidly developing communities in not only southeastern Wisconsin but the entire State as well. Within Milwaukee County, the City is truly the County's last "frontier" with the City having the County's most significant amount of remaining undeveloped land. The City must be prepared to ensure that all future urban and suburban growth in the City occurs in a manner that maintains and improves the quality of life, environment, community character, and tax base of the City. This is an overall basic planning tenet, or principle, used to guide the preparation of this Plan.

The City of Franklin has been dealing with its relatively high level of growth in a sound manner. Since the 1960s, this has been accomplished through the use of its detailed neighborhood plans as well as its other planning tools. City officials, however, recognize that conditions and community attitudes have changed from those prevailing at the time of the initial preparation of the early plans and planning tools. City officials also recognize that these plans and tools should be revised and amended to reflect those changes and that such revisions and amendments are accomplished most effectively on a City-wide comprehensive basis. Thus, the City, through the preparation and adoption of this Plan and its various elements, has taken a comprehensive and thorough approach to planning the City.

This Plan represents a vision for the City of Franklin which is founded upon sound planning practice. Many of the concepts used to develop this Plan represent the most current planning thought in the areas of community character preservation, natural resource protection, and land use and land use intensity control. These planning techniques, among others, are used to assure that this Plan is realized over time.

LEGAL BASIS FOR COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN PREPARATION

Section 62.23 of the Wisconsin Statutes sets forth the enabling legislation for the creation of city plan commissions such as the City of Franklin Plan Commission. In addition, Section 62.23 of the Statutes also sets forth the legislation necessary for cities to prepare comprehensive master plans for the physical development of the municipality. The comprehensive master plan set forth in this Plan, as well as its various detailed Plan maps and other component elements, represents the City's response to these statutory requirements.

PUBLIC INPUT INTO THE PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS AND PLAN AMENDMENT

Numerous public meetings were held on this Plan throughout its preparation. These public meetings included public hearings on each of the twelve Plan chapters and appendices as well as the various detailed subarea plans (see Chapter 8). These meetings were well attended and spanned a period of nearly three years from 1989 to 1992. The public input gained from these meetings was invaluable in the preparation of the final Plan documents.

Adjustments to this Plan should be made only when such changes meet the expressed criteria set forth in Chapter 12 and following public input relative to such changes. If these criteria are met, this Plan, or its component elements, should be revised in a manner similar to its original development, with substantial citizen participation and by Plan Commission resolution prior to any Plan change or rezoning recommendation.

SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF COMMUNITY CONCERN

Several areas of significant community concern emerged during the planning process. These areas included:

1. The preservation and enhancement of the City's community character (see Chapters 4 and 8);

2. The protection of the City's remaining natural resource features (see Chapter 3);
3. Addressing the problem of the City's gross "overzoning" (i.e. the designation of land for residential, commercial, institutional, or industrial use, or intensity of use, that is beyond the community's short-term needs for such land uses; see Chapter 5);
4. The timely acquisition of public parks and schools sites (see Chapter 9) for City residents; and
5. The creation of a plan for the City with built-in flexibility relative to both the design of residential and nonresidential areas as well as the plan amendment process.

Although these five issues came to the forefront during public discussions, this does not minimize the importance of other issues presented and discussed during the Plan preparation process. Chapter 6 of this Plan titled "Objectives, Principles, Standards, and Urban Design Criteria," for instance, also addresses many of the other community planning issues which emerged. Thus, the comprehensive and detailed nature of this Plan, and its various elements, is in direct response to the complex nature of all of these issues.

PLAN FLEXIBILITY

This Plan provides for a certain degree of plan flexibility. This flexibility is evident in both the planned residential and nonresidential areas as well as in the protection of the valuable natural resource features of the City.

Residential Development Flexibility

With respect to residential development, for instance, a number of flexible options are set forth relative to lot size and open space requirements in the residential land use districts (see Chapter 8). Under both earlier plans for the City and the zoning ordinance existing at the time of the preparation of this Plan, there were only eight residential development districts (or options) available to developers (not including the PDD District). Each of these eight districts had a minimum lot size requirement but none addressed the preservation of open space.

All residential areas illustrated on the detailed area plans presented in Chapter 8 have been designed as "conventional" subdivisions. This is highly reflective of the actual types of residential development which have occurred, and continue to occur, in the City. Based

upon these historic and continuing residential development trends, the "conventional" approach used in these plans is responsive to the land market for "conventional" lot subdivisions.

However, this Plan must also address the potential future demand for alternative residential development patterns. Therefore, this Plan sets forth a total of 28 flexible residential development options for the various residential land use districts. These options allow for both the development of "conventional" design subdivisions as well as "clustered" subdivisions which would provide for the preservation of significant open space. These flexible alternatives to the "conventional" subdivision design call for the maintenance of the overall residential within the various residential land use districts while at the same time allowing for a variety of lot sizes and levels of open space preservation. Once these various options are included in the City zoning ordinance, developers would be able to use these options as changes may occur in the residential land market.

In addition, the VR Village Residence District was added in order to effectively eliminate substandard lots in the "Village" of St. Martins.

Nonresidential Development Flexibility

The various nonresidential land use districts described in Chapter 8 are based upon the provision of an adequate amount of landscaped open space area for each developed nonresidential lot as well as the level of nonresidential land use intensity. In this respect, standards are set forth for individual land use types while maintaining a consistent level of development intensity in each of the districts. This is accomplished through the use of floor area ratios and landscape surface ratios (see Chapter 8) which are specific to the type of use which may be developed.

Under the City zoning ordinance existing at the time of the preparation of this Plan, there were a limited number of nonresidential development districts available to developers (not including the PDD District). These districts were inadequate to cope with nonresidential development in any meaningful way (see Chapter 5). Three new business districts were added (the B-4 South 27th Street Business District, CC City Civic Center District, and VB Village Business District); one new industrial district (the BP Business Park District); and three special districts (the AO Airport Overlay District, HPO Historic Preservation Overlay District, and the L-1 Landfill District). These new land use districts provide significantly more flexibility and choice than existed in the City during the time of the preparation of this Plan.

Natural Resource Protection

This Plan promotes the mapping of natural resource protection features on a site-by-site basis (see Chapter 3.) In this way, the inflexibility of the use of natural resource overlay districts, typically associated with zoning, would be eliminated for some resource features which typically change through time (such as woodlands). What would emerge from such a system would be a true up-to-date resource delineation. These delineations would become an integral part of the development review and approval process. For instance, such delineations should be required of developers to be submitted with all development proposals including subdivision plats, certified survey maps, and other site plans.

IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY AND PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

It is important to recognize that the vision embraced in this Plan cannot be fully realized unless City officials pursue an immediate course of action to properly amend all Plan implementing ordinances. From a sound planning practice standpoint, as well as from a legal one, there must be consistency between this Plan and its implementing zoning ordinance. This Plan has been structured to achieve this necessary consistency. The City ordinances which must be comprehensively amended include the zoning and subdivision ordinances. Various zoning districts will need to be either amended or newly established in order to properly implement the various planned land use districts (see Chapters 8 and 12). Other ordinances and Plan implementing tools will also have to be introduced as soon as possible (see Chapter 12).

MAPPING USED TO PREPARE THIS COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

The base maps used to prepare the various City-wide and detailed plan maps of this Plan were compiled by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). These included 1" = 200' topographic, cadastral, and combined topographic/ cadastral maps as well as 1" = 1000' base mapping of the entire City area. SEWRPC's 1985 regional land use inventory data was used as a basis for determining existing land uses and preparing the existing community character analysis of the City and the various subareas of the City (see Chapter 4). Aerial photographs of the City, as prepared by SEWRPC and taken in 1985 and 1990, were used for reference and other data gathering purposes throughout the planning process. The various SEWRPC-prepared base maps, land use and soils data, as well as the SEWRPC delineated environmental corridor and isolated natural areas, were invaluable in preparing this Plan and its various component elements.

